

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Project Summary Briefing

Funding Pools:

Critical Conservation Areas
National
State

Proposals Received:

NRCS received nearly 600 pre-proposals for RCPP. Of those pre-proposals, 210 were submitted for final evaluation. Over 100 of those will be funded in fiscal year 2015.

Funding for FY2014/2015 Projects:

About \$370 million

Partner Funding for FY2014/2015 Projects:

Up to an estimated \$400 million

Summary

In January 2015, USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will announce about \$370 million in funding to over 100 high-impact conservation projects across the nation in the first round of awards under the new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Multiple partners are involved in each project, leveraging their financial and technical capabilities, and more than doubling the reach of the program through their contributions. RCPP is a radically different approach to investing in natural resource conservation that empowers local communities and demonstrates the importance of strong public-private partnerships in delivering local solutions to natural resource challenges.

Background

The RCPP is a new, comprehensive and flexible program designed to build strong and diverse partnerships, multiply the federal conservation investment, and target conservation goals on a regional or watershed scale. RCPP energizes unique local-state-federal partnerships and creates new opportunities for innovation that work for individuals and communities at multiple scales.

RCPP draws on local knowledge and networks to fuel conservation projects. Partners are in the driver's seat with technical and financial help from NRCS. State, local and regional partners join with agricultural producers to achieve specific, measurable natural resource results such as:

- clean and abundant water to provide drinking water for communities, irrigate crops, and provide habitat for wildlife;
- healthy soils that are resilient to drought and are the foundation to produce food, feed and fiber for the nation and for export; and
- enhanced wildlife habitat to benefit at-risk species such as salmon and sage grouse, and support a diversified rural economy.

RCPP in FY 2015

In May 2014, NRCS announced the availability of RCPP funding. The response was overwhelming:

- Nearly 600 pre-proposals were received by the July 14 deadline;
- Partners requested nearly \$2.8 billion in program funds (nearly six times the available funding) and leveraged nearly \$3 billion; and
- In October 2014, 210 applicants submitted full, final proposals, requesting nearly \$1.4 billion (almost 4 times the available funding) and leveraging about \$1.3 billion.

In January, NRCS will award nearly \$370 million to implement over 100 high-impact projects. Projects range from local efforts to protect important drinking water supplies to regional efforts aimed at preserving and

expanding critical salmon habitat. Projects also target solutions to address issues at the national level, such as improving water quality in Lake Champlain and the Chesapeake Bay or increasing water availability in the Colorado River Basin. Projects may be at the state or multi-state level or within one of the eight Critical Conservation Areas (CCA) designated by the Secretary of Agriculture. Projects at each scale are represented in the fiscal year 2015 awards.

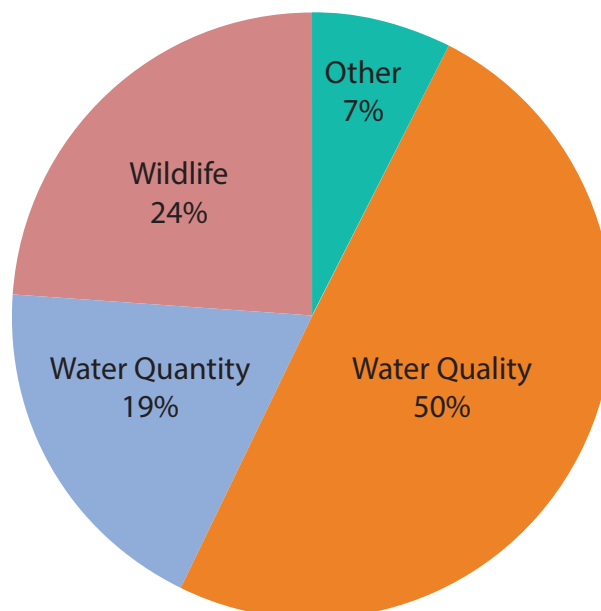
Proposals demonstrate an appetite for working across boundaries, bringing forward strong, nontraditional partnerships that break down barriers. Hundreds of partners with wide ranging interests are represented across the projects, including conservation districts, agribusiness, for- and non-profit organizations, local, state and federal agencies (e.g., state water quality agencies, U.S. Army) and Tribal governments.

Funding Pool	Invited Proposals	Submitted Proposals	Funding Requested	Final Proposals for Funding	Estimated Offer
CCA	85	79	\$718.4 million	24	\$130.6 million
National	53	47	\$452.6 million	21	\$148.8 million
State	93	84	\$237.5 million	70	\$93.1 million
Total	231	210	\$1.4 billion	115	\$372.5 million

Although all of the projects will create multiple natural resource benefits because of their positions on the landscape, partners were asked to identify a primary natural resource objective for each project.

- The results bear out the Nation’s increasing emphasis on water resources—either because of challenges to water quality or water quantity, or both.
- In nearly 70 percent of all projects, partners identified addressing water resource issues as a primary objective.
- Water quality was the most common project objective; ranging from locally focused efforts to help producers meet water quality regulations to watershed-scale efforts to drive tangible improvement in major water bodies.
- Projects that focus on benefiting wildlife and agricultural or forest landscapes accounted for nearly 24 percent of all projects; ranging from projects that will benefit both iconic species such as the sage grouse and ranching operations to projects that will benefit listed species and preserve agricultural production.
- About 7 percent of projects focus on a variety of other natural resource objectives, such as energy conservation, soil quality, plant condition, or loss of productive agricultural land.

**Funding Distribution by
Primary Resource Concern**



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Natural Resources Conservation Service

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